

Using the Simple and Complex
Directional Complements in Chinese for Beginners

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Qing Zhang". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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Abstract

For native English speakers, learning Chinese can be a real challenge. Not only are there severe learning curves in terms of going from using Roman characters for words to the more pictorial Chinese characters, but there are differences in grammar that also present their own challenges. While studying abroad in China, my 读写 “Reading and Writing” professor introduced us to the concept of verb complements. These can tell the listener or reader how, when, where, and by whom an action is performed. Because all of my classes were taught entirely in Chinese, discovering how to interpret these concepts was extremely difficult. I eventually understood how to use the simple and complex directional complements, but it was a long struggle. I realized that it was all a matter of perspective and that it depended entirely upon who the speaker is and where the speaker was located. Upon gaining this insight, I decided to write this paper in English so that students like myself would have an easier time going through this process. The format resembles something like the tutor sessions I provided both at Ball State University and at Shanghai Normal University to fellow students of the Chinese language.

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I would like to thank my native Chinese-speaking friends Gao and Chen-Yuen Bowie Cheek: they offered to proof-read the Chinese passages as I posted them online, which they did with an incredibly fast turn-around. Because of their efforts, I was able to write this paper faster and with more confidence, knowing that native Chinese speakers understood my examples and approved of my explanations.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank Matthew Valena, a fellow student who started on this language journey at the same time as I, and someone who has become one of my best friends. I thank him for looking at this paper from a student's perspective and for all the feedback and support you provided.

I. Introduction

1. Rationale

While studying abroad in Shanghai during the fall semester of 2009, I encountered the verb complement structure. I really struggled with it, and learning this structure came more from repeated usage than from a cohesive English explanation. I refused to consider that the only method for understanding this came from repetition because I believe that there is always an explanation for everything. I started to collate my notes and translate them into English, trying to find said explanation through various rephrasing and re-organization methods. I also bought the book A Practical Chinese Grammar for Foreigners, written by Li De Jin and translated by Liu Ying, at the beginning of the semester. This book was useful in that it clearly listed the rules governing how to utilize the complement structure in both English and Chinese. However, it was filled with linguistic and grammatical terms such as, “A verbal predicate can take the aspectual particle 了 before its complement of direction,” (Liu 303) and that made things even more confusing. My major was Political Science, not Linguistics, and my English classes never went this in-depth with the terminology. As well, the book provided a plethora of Chinese examples but never gave their translations, which impeded my understanding. I could never be certain that my personal translations accurately conveyed the complements' meanings.

By the end of the semester, I had hammered out what I felt was a basic understanding of the complement, enough that I was able to explain it to other classmates and feel confident that I was not leading them astray on the final exam. Because of that experience and my brief involvement in tutoring 100-level Chinese students under Dr. Qing Zhang in the fall of 2008, I felt it only appropriate to try to continue passing along the knowledge I had gained in my advanced Chinese study to other beginning and intermediate students.

2. Goals for the Paper

This paper strives to give you a better understanding of one of the grammar tools that allow for further expansion of your Chinese knowledge. Specifically, this paper will examine the verb complement and how it impacts your everyday usage of Chinese. Through a collection of short, paragraph-long examples in Chinese and each story's subsequent translation and analysis, the usage of the verb complement in Chinese will hopefully become clearer to you, the student. Because every passage written in Chinese is translated and the intent of the paper is to provide an introduction to the complement structure, this paper avoids similar comprehension issues like those I had with A Practical Chinese Grammar for Foreigners (Liu) and can be used by students with no prior Chinese language instruction. However, due to the volume of Chinese utilized and the subject matter itself, it is recommended that you have completed at minimum a semester's worth of Chinese before attempting to truly work through the examples given.

3. Brief Outline

We begin with the simple directional complement before moving on to the more complex directional complements. Both the simple and the complex complement sections have definitions, instructions on how to use the complement in question, and example paragraphs in Chinese. Where it proves useful, images are employed to further illustrate how the specific complement is used in the Chinese examples. The simple complements cover 去 and 来, while the complex complements cover 上去/上来, 下去/下来, 回去/回来, 过去/过来, 进去/进来, 出去/出来, and 起来. Appendix A includes all of the complements listed above, as well as those verbs most commonly paired with each complement set, example sentences, and their translations. Appendix B includes translations of all Chinese passages.

4. Tips

The most important thing to know before starting your study of complements is that the complements involved are verbs or adjectives when used on their own. Because they have meaning when used separately, giving yourself a brief refresher course on their meanings is useful. Most of these you already know, such as 去 or 来, the two characters upon which the entirety of directional complements are formed. You can use them on their own just fine in sentences like 今天我去上海 “Today I go to Shanghai” or 我来了! “I have arrived!” However, their meanings change slightly when used as complements, as you will see below.

As stated earlier, all Chinese used in this paper is translated; this is about grammar, not reading comprehension. Regardless, keep your dictionary handy. It is very likely you will gain more from this paper by doing the translations yourself than by simply reading it in English. Do not let them fool you: complements can be tricky things. Some aspects of how they work cannot fully be conveyed in another language. As always, a language's meaning is best understood in its original format and not in a translation. During the progression of my Chinese courses and while writing this paper, I relied upon the MDBG Chinese-English Dictionary, an online project supported by several international and Ivy League universities¹ and well-known corporations² (“Chinese Dictionary for Windows”). It is incredibly thorough and convenient, as it allows for English-Chinese translation and character look-up by *pinyin* “Chinese phonetics,” individual Chinese characters, and hand-written characters drawn with your mouse, and I highly recommend it for your personal use.

¹ The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Fudan University, Johns Hopkins, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Tsinghua University, and Yale, to name a few

² China Guangdong Nuclear Group, ConocoPhillips, Microsoft, and Saint Gobain, amongst others

II. Simple Directional Complements: 去 and 来

1. Defining “verb complement”

First, a complement is very different from a compliment. The latter is a way to tell someone you like her hair or that he did a good job on organizing his room. The former is what we address here. There are several types of complements and some are easier than others; however, in this paper we will only be examining the complement of direction. According to Liu, a verb complement is “a word or phrase attached³ to a predicate verb to indicate the direction towards which an action proceeds” (Liu 302). A simpler explanation might be that the directional complement demonstrates, for instance, whether the ball was thrown towards you or away from you.

2. Defining “simple directional complement”

The simple directional complement is formed by adding 去 or 来 to a verb. Unlike how it sounds, the simple directional complement does not show the direction that the action takes on its own. Instead, it shows the direction of the action as it occurs *in relation to the speaker*. This is a very important distinction to make. For instance, 一个女人抛一个球 “A woman throws a ball” – but does she throw it towards you or away from you? A simple complement of direction added to this sentence would give you the answer, 一个女人抛来一个球 “A woman throws a ball (at you).”

3. Translation differences between 去 and 来

Before we dive into sentence structures, we need to cover how to translate 去 and 来 when they are used as directional complements. Without a firm grasp on this process, the

3 The original quote uses “attacted” here. I am fairly certain they meant to say “attached,” so I have edited the quote above.

directional complement can appear to be too abstract for some to understand. The easiest way to explain their meanings is through images.

According to the MDBG Dictionary, the character 去 is translated as “to go towards” (“去”) but that explanation can be seen as the general definition of the character itself and not as it is when put into the directional complement structure. Perhaps a better explanation would be: “going from Point A to Point B, where Point A is the speaker and Point B is a point that is located away from the speaker at Point A.” My professor at Shanghai Normal University, however, relied upon an image similar to the following for her explanation:

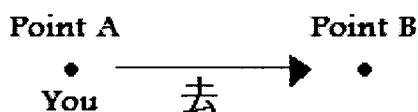


Figure 1

As you can see from the image above, 去 demonstrates an action that moves away from the speaker.

The character 来 acts in a similar way to 去, but its meaning is completely opposite. Instead of meaning, “to go towards,” it means “to come towards” (MDBG, 来). Instead of you moving to Point B from Point A, something from Point B is moving toward you at Point A. My professor would illustrate it like this:

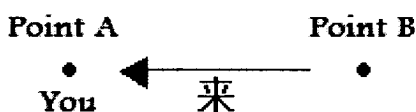


Figure 2

As indicated, 来 demonstrates an action that moves toward the speaker.

Keep these slight but very important differences in mind as we continue. As I stated above, without having a good foundation of these two terms, the directional complement will result in increased confusion and frustration on your part.

4. Grammar Usage

The basic grammar structure for simple complements is as follows:

Subject + Verb + Complement

This kind of structure is used when, for instance, you are on the phone with your parents who are at home and you are informing them that you are returning. Here, you would say 我回去 “I return (toward you and away from where I am presently).” If you were running toward them, you would say 我跑去 “I run (toward you and away from my current location).”

When adding in a place or an object, insert it between the verb and the directional complement, like so:

Subject + Verb + Place + Complement

or

Subject + Verb + Object + Complement

In this case, the sentence 我回去 can be modified into something more specific. Say instead you needed to specify to someone to where you were returning. Then, you would say 我回家去 “I am returning home (going toward the speaker and away from where I currently am).”

If the verb takes an object, you can also place the object after 去/来:

Subject + Verb + Complement + Object

However, using this structure often indicates that the action has been completed (Jin 307). Here, an example sentence would read, 他带来一本书 “He brought (to the speaker) a book.”

In order to indicate past tense for verbs which take a place, you insert 了 directly after the complement.

Subject + Verb + Place + Complement + 了

Such usage would look like this: 我回家来了 “I have returned home.”

If you wanted to indicate that you had not done something, do not look to the complement to provide you with the answer of how to negate the action. Ignore the complement entirely and look to the verb. Depending on which verb you use, you will select 没 or 不. The structure will look like this:

Subject + 没/不 + Verb + (Object, Place) + Complement

and our example sentence changes to 我没回家去 “I have not returned home.”

5. Example

There are two simple directional complements: 去 and 来. To review: singularly, 去 means “to go” and 来 means “to arrive.” As complements, they mean “to go away from the speaker” and “to come towards the speaker,” respectively. In order to gain a better understanding of how these simple complements can appear in context, let's look at the following example⁴:

今天是星期六，王朋没有课，于是就躺在床上睡懒觉。

Jīntiān shì xīngqīliù, Wáng Péng méiyǒu kè, yúshì jiù tǎng zài chuáng shàng shuìlǎnjiào.

过了一会儿，他妈妈喊道“王朋！现在已经九点半了，你还不起床？”

Guò le yíhuìr, tā māma hǎndào, “Wáng Péng! Xiànzài yǐjīng jiǔdiǎnbàn le, nǐ hái bù qǐchuáng?”

⁴ Unless otherwise cited, all examples given in Chinese are written by the author and have been proof-read by native Chinese speakers to ensure accuracy.

快下楼来(1)吃早饭了！”

Kuài xiàlóu lái chī zǎofān le!”

王朋咕哝着说：“知道了！我马上来(2)！”于是他穿好衣服，走下楼去(3)。

Wáng Péng gūnong zhe shuō: “Zhīdào! Wǒ mǎshàng lái!” Yúshì tā chuān hǎo yīfu, zǒu xiàlóu qù.

In this scenario, it is a Saturday morning and Wang Peng is trying to sleep in. His mother, upon seeing that it is already 9:30, tries to wake him up. We will first address the complement structures in yellow before addressing the structure in green.

If we were to translate this story into graphics, our scene would look something like this:

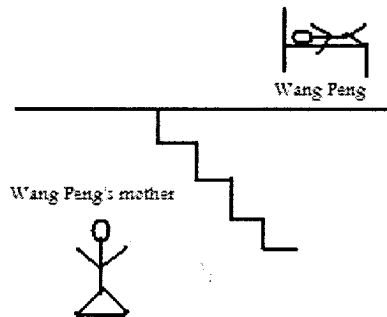


Figure 3

To begin our analysis, there are two things we need to know when it comes to understanding directional complements. They are:

- A) who is speaking, and
- B) whether the action comes towards the speaker or away from him.

In Example 1, Wang Peng's mother tells him that it is time to get up and he ought to come downstairs to eat breakfast (下楼 “go downstairs;” 来 “come towards the speaker”).

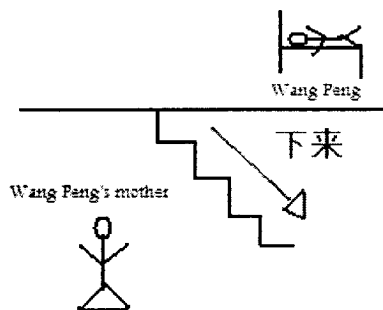


Figure 4

Since she is literally speaking here, Point A is easy to determine. She wants Wang Peng, who is upstairs, to come downstairs, or towards her, to eat breakfast; hence, we use 来 to indicate in which direction she wants Wang Peng to travel.

Example 2, 我马上来! “I’m coming right now!” demonstrates how easy it is to become confused when translating and understanding directional complements. Why does Wang Peng use 来 instead of 去 when we know he is changing his position and going downstairs to his mother? This example highlights the most important feature of the directional complement: perspective. If there are two people in the same location, such as in the same room, and one person was changing his location from Location A to Location B, you would say in English, “I’m *going* to Location B” instead of “I’m *coming* to Location B.” However, if those two people are in the same building but not in the immediate vicinity of each other and Person A told Person B that he was changing his location to Person A’s location, Person B would say, “I’m *coming*” instead of “I’m *going*.” In this example, Wang Peng and his mother are in the same house but not the same room. Therefore, he states 我马上来! “I’m coming right now!” instead of 我马上去! “I’m going right now!”

Let's move on to Example 3. First, who is the speaker? No one is conversing with anyone at this point, so in this case we go with the subject of the sentence. Here, that subject is 他 “he.” So, Wang Peng is the speaker. After Wang Peng wakes up and gets dressed, he 下

楼去 “goes downstairs,” not 下楼来 “comes downstairs.” Why do we use 去 here instead of 来? Wherever Wang Peng goes, he will be completing his action where he ends up, so really he's just going towards himself in the end, right? Wrong. Wang Peng is moving from Point A, his bed, to Point B, downstairs.

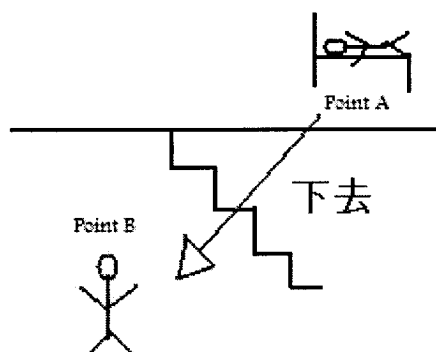


Figure 5

He is moving *away* from where he begins the motion. Therefore, we would say 下楼去 instead of 下楼来.

Now that we have covered the simple directional complement, we will move on to the complex directional complement. In the examples that follow, we will continue to intersperse the simple structures with their more complex versions. Mixing the two structures together has two benefits: first, it will offer you more chances to see the simple and complex structures side by side, which allows for a better understanding of what distinguishes one from the other. Second, despite its name, the simple structure can appear more difficult than one might expect. In the examples below you will be exposed to ways in which this can happen and how to deal with them.

III. Complex Directional Complements

1. Defining “complex complement”

What makes complex directional complements complex? Basically, these are the simple complements attached to other verbs to give those actions direction. When a select number of verbs are paired with 去 or 来, they can form complex directional complements. These complex complements can in turn be paired with other verbs to indicate two different directions. This differs from the single complement structure because 去 and 来 indicate only one direction.

Because at their heart these complex complements are formed from individual verbs and the directional complement, they can appear as though they can be used on their own. This is not entirely true. For instance, 回去 means “to return (to a place) away from the speaker.” Here, it is the simple directional complement, 去, being used in conjunction with the verb 回, “to return.” However, when we pair 回去 with the verb 飞, “to fly,” it becomes 飞回去 and means “to fly away from the speaker in order to return (to a place).” The meaning of 回去 does not actually change; instead, it adds meaning to the verb 飞.

Sounds pretty complex, right? As long as your knowledge of simple directional complements is strong, and you are willing to go back and refer to your dictionary whenever you think you are becoming lost, you will have no problem with complex directional complements.

The rules for complex directional complements are essentially the same as those for the simple directional complements, though of course there are a few additions. First, complex complements of direction are comprised of seven specific verbs paired with either 去 or 来. These verbs are 上, 来, 进, 出, 回, 过, and 起. It is important to keep in mind that

when these seven verbs are used in the complement structures, *they are not to be interpreted as verbs themselves*. They instead become something like verb helpers. This may sound like a rather intuitive point for some and thus may not require the additional stress placed on it. However, when you are first starting out on the path to Chinese fluency, especially when you are first introduced to the complement structure, it is an easy mistake to make and can really interfere with translations and sentence composition.

The following table demonstrates how these verbs and 去/来 are paired:

Table 1

	上	下	进	出	回	过	起
去	上去	下去	进去	出去	回去	过去	----
来	上来	下来	进来	出来	回来	过来	起来

We will examine how these pairings are utilized in the following sections. Let us continue to follow Wang Peng as he continues throughout his Saturday adventures.

2. Grammar Usage

The basic structure for complex directional complements looks very similar to that for the simple complement structure:

S + V + Complex Complement

Of course, in practice this structure looks as though it has three verbs, and in effect it does. As stated above, when using complex directional complements, the direction of the action in the sentence now has two directions, one governed by one of the seven verbs listed above in the table and the other by 去 or 来. Let's look at the example sentence, 他走进来 “He walks inside.” The proper English translation of this sentence does not quite communicate the two directions. A more direct translation would look more like, “He walks inside (towards the

speaker).” Here we can more easily see the impact of the main verb and the two directions.

First, he walks. Secondly, he walks inside. Thirdly, walking inside brings him in the direction of the speaker, whoever that may be.

If the verb attached to the complex complement takes a place and not an object, the place must be inserted between the two components of the complex complement (Hanyu Jiaocheng 139):

S + V + (上、下、进、出、etc) + Place + 去/来

The example used for the basic structure contains a verb that can take a place. If we were to add a location to that original sentence, it would read, 他走进教室来 “He walks into the classroom (toward the speaker).”

If the verb attached to the complex complement takes an object or thing instead of a location, there are two structures you can use. Deciding which structure to use is entirely up to the writer or speaker; I have not found anything to indicate that the placement of the object indicates whether the action has been completed, as it is with the simple directional complement. The first structure places the object after the entire complement:

S + V + Complex Complement + Object

The second places the object in between the first character of the complement (one of the seven verbs above) and 去/来:

S + V + (上、下、进、出、etc) + Object + 去/来

If we use the first structure, an example sentence would read, 她寄回来一个礼物 “She sent (the speaker) a present.” If we were to use the second structure, the sentence would look like this: 她寄回一个礼物来 “She sent a present (to the speaker).”

For past tense, if the verb does not take a place, you would insert 了 either directly after the verb or after the complement, a structure which is similar to the simple directional complement past tense structure:

Subject + Verb + 了 + Complex Complement

or

Subject + Verb + Complex Complement + 了

Here, the examples would read like this: 他买回来了一件礼物 or 他买回一件礼物来了
“He bought a gift and brought it back (to this location).”

A note before we dive into the more detailed examples: because this paper tries to present the most accurate and natural-sounding Chinese, some of the complement structures will be several characters long and look exceedingly more complex than they really are. Do not let yourself feel overwhelmed as you go through this. Remember: each will be explained immediately afterward. There is no test on this and all the Chinese is translated in Appendix A. Keep your dictionaries handy as we continue onward!

3. Example: V + 上去/上 and V + 下去/下来

王朋走到楼下，他妈妈已经给他准备好了早饭。

Wáng Péng zǒu dào lóuxià, tā māma yǐjīng gěi tā zhǔnbèi hàole zǎofàn.

“妈妈，是油条和豆浆啊？这我最喜欢的早饭了。”

“Māma, shì yóutiáo hé dòujiāng a? Zhè shì wǒ zuì xǐhuan de zǎofān le.”

“我知道！今天是你的生日啊！生日快乐！”她拥抱了一下她的儿子，

“Wǒ zhīdao! Jīntiān shì nǐde shēngrì a! Shēngrì kuàilè!” Tā yōngbào le yíxià tā de érzi,

“你看！奶奶寄来了一个游戏机(1)，给你的。”

“Nǐ kàn! Nǎinai jìlái le yíge yóuxìjī, gěi nǐde.”

“太好了！”王朋喊道，“是最终幻想十三！我朋友告诉我

“Tàihǎole!” Wáng Péng hǎnzhe, “Shì Zuì ZhongHuan Xiǎng Shísān! Wǒ péngyou gàosu wǒ

这是一款非常好玩的游戏机！奶奶怎么会知道啊？”

zhèshì yīkuǎn fēicháng hǎowán de yóuxìjī! Nǎinai zěnmé huì zhīdao a?”

“你吃完早饭后应该给她打个电话谢谢她，但是现在请先放

“Nǐ chī wán zǎofān hòu yīnggāi gěi tā dǎ gè diànhuà xièxie tā, dànshì xiànzài qǐng xiān fàng

下那个游戏机。”

xià nà ge yóuxìjī.”

“最好吃的早饭加上超级好玩的游戏机！”他边说边把游戏机放

“Zuìhǎo chī de zǎofān jiāshàng chāojí hǎowán de yóuxìjī!” Tā biānshuō biān bǎ yóuxìjī fàng

上楼去(2)。然后又跑下来(3)高兴地说“这是我最棒的生日了！”

shànglóu qù. Ránhòu yòu pǎo xiàlái gāoxìng dì shuō “Zhè shì wǒ zuì bàngde shēngrì le!”

We have discovered that it is Wang Peng's birthday! In Example 1, his mother tells him that his grandmother sent him a present – a video game, to be exact. Let's break this example down:

奶奶 寄来了 一个游戏机

Subject + Verb/Complement + Object

First, we have to determine the speaker according to the context. Here the prepositional phrase 给你的 at the end of the sentence comes in handy. The use of 给 indicates who receives the video game. In this case, that person (or the speaker) is Wang Peng, because “Your grandmother sent a video game *to you*.”

In the section on simple complements, we saw an example that had the speaker be the person saying the sentence in the narrative. Why then is the speaker Wang Peng and not his mother, who is actually speaking here? This is a question that often confuses students as they initially encounter the directional complement. Thankfully it has a relatively simple answer: there are no first person personal pronouns. Had Wang Peng's mother stated, “Your grandmother sent *me* a present,” then she would be identified as the speaker and not Wang Peng.

Now, Question B asks, “Does the action come towards the speaker or away from them?” Because Wang Peng's mother uses the verb 寄 “to send,” we know that his grandmother is not nearby and thus the video game is coming towards the speaker, or Wang Peng. Wang Peng is not sending the video game away from himself; he is receiving it. Therefore, we use 寄来 instead of 寄去。

For the second example, we have this sentence: 他边说边把游戏机放上楼去。Here, we have the verbs 说 and 放. Which verb do we use? Here it is best to remember that the first character of the complement will always be located directly after the verb to which it applies. Therefore, we know that we ought to concern ourselves with 放, as the sentence states 放上楼去。

Now that we know which verb to use, we can address the complement. We saw a similar complement used in Example 3 in the Simple Complement section of the paper, though there we used 下 instead of 上. The use of 上 indicates “up” instead of “down,” so the complement 上楼去 means “to go upstairs.”

With the verb issue resolved, it is much easier to determine the answers to Point A and Point B. Because this sentence is not spoken, and because it only has one subject, we are able

to determine that 他 “he” is the speaker used to determine the direction of the complement.

Why use 去 instead of 来? It is for the same reason as that shown in Example 3 in the Simple Complement section. Wang Peng completes his action away from where he originally started, *going* upstairs instead of *coming* upstairs. Therefore, we use 去。

Our last example in this block of text is the easiest we have seen in this section. The entire sentence in which the complex complement appears is:

然后又跑下来高兴地说“这是我最棒的生日了！”

The only potentially challenging aspect of this sentence is that it does not have a directly stated subject. This is fairly common in Chinese and means that the subject is implied or that the reader already knows who the subject is. Typically the subject has already been stated in the sentence prior, which in this case means the subject is Wang Peng. We can verify this by understanding the adverb 又. Its presence or usage in a sentence indicates an action happening again. In this case, the action occurring again is 跑, which we know because it is placed directly after 又. Because Wang Peng was running in the previous sentence, and this sentence tells us someone is running again, we know that the speaker is Wang Peng.

The complement structure is straightforward. The complement 跑下来 means “to run down (toward the speaker).” If Wang Peng is the speaker, and since he is the subject of the sentence, how is he able to run toward himself? Here he is not actually running toward himself. Since he rapidly returned to his original position, he is in reality running toward his original position.

4. Example: V + 回去/回来

王朋吃完早饭，给他奶奶打了个电话：“奶奶，您好！”

Wáng Péng chī wán zǎofàn, gěi tā nǎinai dǎlegè diànhuà: “Nǎinai, nínhǎo!”

“你好，乖孙子！生日快乐！”

“Nǐhǎo, guāi sūnzi! Shēngrì kuale!”

“谢谢奶奶！您的礼物非常好，我觉得好玩极了！您怎么知道我

“Xièxie Nǎinai! Nín de lǐwù fēicháng hǎo, wǒ juéde hǎowán jile! Nín zěnmē zhīdao wǒ
喜欢那款游戏机？”

xǐhuan nàkuǎn yóuxìjī?”

奶奶笑着说：“我不告诉你，是秘密！今天是你的生日。

Nǎinai xiàozheshuō: “Wǒ bù (tone 2nd!) gàosu nǐ, shì mìmì! Jīntiān shì nǐ de shēngrì.

你准备干什么？”

Nǐ zhǔnbèi gan shénme?”

“我今天想到我朋友家去玩 FF13,⁵可能还有其他的事。

“Wǒ jīntiān xiǎng dào wǒ péngyoujiā qù wán FF13, kěnéng hái yǒu qí tā de shì.

您什么时候飞回来呢？”

Nín shénme shíhou fēihuílái ne?”

“下个星期三或星期四。我还没有买飞机票。”

“Xiàgè xīngqīsān huò xīngqīsì. Wǒ hái méiyǒu mǎi fēijīpiào.”

“哦，知道了！奶奶，您的礼物是我最喜欢的，谢谢！”

“Ó, zhīdào! nǎinai, nín de lǐwù shì wǒ zuì xǐhuan de, xièxie!”

“不客气，孙子！好了，这个电话太长了，太费钱了！

“Bùkèqì, sūnzi! Hǎo le, zhègè diànhuà tài cháng le, tài fèi qián le!

代我向妈妈问好！”

Dài wǒ xiàng nǐ māma wèn hǎo!”

“好的。下星期见！”

“Hǎo de. Xiàxīngqī jiàn!”

“再见！”

“Zàijiàn!”

5 FF13 is the abbreviation of the game mentioned earlier. Its English name is Final Fantasy 13.

This particular complement pairing is one of the easier complex directional complement structures to master. When attached to a verb, it means to return to a place that is away from the speaker or near the speaker. It is often used when discussing travel plans with others, which is how it is used here.

In this example, Wang Peng asks his paternal grandmother,

您什么时候飞回来啊？

First, who is the speaker? Since this example comes in the middle of a spoken phone conversation between Wang Peng and his grandmother, we know that Wang Peng is speaking. Next, we need to determine whether his grandmother is coming toward Wang Peng or if she is going home. In this sentence 来 is used instead of 去. This indicates that the action, 飞, is happening in the direction of Wang Peng, which means that his grandmother will be flying home to wherever Wang Peng is.

Because of the relative simplicity of this complement, there is only one example in this immediate paragraph. However, if you feel that you need more examples to really solidify this structure in your head, the other examples are located in Appendix A.

Now that you have an idea of not only how to use the complement structure but also how it can appear when used in various examples, it is my hope that you feel comfortable enough to proceed on your own. Of course, it is one thing to understand how to do something and quite another to put it into practice. To that end, I have included a table of commonly-paired verbs and complements, as well as example sentences and their translations. This table is also located in Appendix A.

IV. Conclusion

Over the course of this paper, we addressed the simple directional complements 去 and 来 and the complex directional complements 上去/上来, 下去/下来, 回去/回来, 过去/过来, 进去/进来, 出去/出来, and 起来. We outlined the grammatical rules, gave structures demonstrating how to use each rule, and provided examples.

My studies showed that the usage of the simple and complex directional complements depended entirely upon perspective. Without knowing who the speaker is and where he or she is located, deciphering either the simple or the complex forms of the directional complement is a nearly impossible task to accomplish. Once I realized this, my understanding of the subject improved dramatically. It is hoped that through reading this paper, other students will benefit from this analysis. However, this paper is meant only as a cursory examination of these complement structures. More research in this area is needed from the perspectives of non-native Chinese speaking students in order to gain a more thorough comprehension of the subject.

Appendix A

Simple Directional Complements

Unless otherwise cited, all Chinese examples are my own. All translations are mine.

Complement	Pinyin	How it's used / Meaning	Examples
来	lai	来: to come / to arrive V+来: demonstrates that the action is completed in the direction of / toward the speaker can be paired with any directional verb 上, 下, 回, 过, 带, 买, 拿, 走, 跑, 飞, 到	我不想回美国来。// I don't want to return to America. 他到他的朋友家来。// He comes to his friend's house. 她妈妈飞来了。// Her mom is flying here.
去	qu	去: to go V+去: demonstrates that the action is completed not in the direction of / away from the speaker can be paired with any directional verb 上, 下, 回, 过, 带, 买, 拿, 走, 跑, 飞, 到	我们进教室去吧。// We should enter the classroom. (Jizhou 60) 我正好要下楼去。// It just so happens that I want to go downstairs. (Jizhou 60) 他回家去了。// He returned home. (Jizhou 60)

Complex Directional Complements

Unless otherwise cited, all examples are my own.

A lot of these verbs you will notice are able to be used with multiple complex complement combinations.

Complement	Pinyin	How it's used / Meaning	Examples
上去	shangqu	上去: to go up V+上去: demonstrates that the action is completed away from the speaker and in a location above where the action originated 放, 爬, 跑, 送, 拿, 开	他放上去一本书。// He put a book there. 她跑上楼去。// She ran upstairs.

Complex Directional Complements

上来	shanglai	上来: to come up V+上来: demonstrates that the action is completed near to the speaker and in a location above where the action originated	他送上来了一束鲜花。// He sent up a bouquet of fresh flowers. (Jizhou 141) 我走上来的。// I walked up here. (Jizhou, 139)
下去	xiaqu	下去: to go down V+下去: demonstrates that the action is completed away from the speaker and in a location beneath where the action originated	他开下去了。// He drove down there. 我看见他跑下楼去了。// I saw him run downstairs. (Jizhou 142)
下来	xialai	下来: to come down V+下来: demonstrates that the action is completed near to the speaker and in a location that is located beneath where the action originated 放, 爬, 跑, 送, 拿, 开, 提, 跳	他跳下来了。// He dove down here. (Jizhou 138) 他从飞机上拿下来了一个箱子。// He brought a box down from the plane. (Jizhou 142)
进去	jinqu	进去: to go in V+进去: demonstrates that the action is completed away from the speaker and inside a location 跳, 走, 跑, 开	我放进去那本书。// I placed that book inside. 老师走进教室去了。// The teacher walked into the classroom.
进来	jinlai	进来: to come in V+进来: demonstrates that the action is completed near to the speaker and inside a location	他跳进来了。// He dove down into here.
出去	chuqu	出去: to go out V+出去: demonstrates that the action is completed away from the speaker and outside the original location	他跑出去了。// He ran outside. 他从飞机上拿提出去了一个箱子。// He brought a box out of the plane.
出来	chulai	出来: to come out; to emerge V+出来: demonstrates that the action is completed near to the speaker and outside the original location 拔, 抽, 走	她们一起走出教室来了。// Together they came out of the classroom. 词典寄出来了没有? // Has the dictionary been mailed here yet? (Jizhou, 142)

Complex Directional Complements			
回去	huiqu	回去: to go back; to return V+回去: used when there are two locations; demonstrates that when the speaker is in Location A, the action is completed away from Location A and ends in Location B	我不想飞回家去。// I don't want to fly home. 可以帮我吗? 我应该还回哪儿去? // Can you help me? Where should I return this?
回来	huilai	回来: to come back; to return V+回来: used when there are two locations; demonstrates that when the speaker is in Location B, the action is completed in Location B after the speaker has left Location A 买, 带, 飞, 骑, 寄,	这本书买回来了。// I bought this book. 他从国外给我带回来一件礼物。// From a foreign country he brought back a gift for me. (Jizhou 139)
过去	guoqu	过去: to go over; to pass by V+过去: demonstrates that the action is completed in a location away from the speaker that is reached after going over a bridge or passing by another location 走, 跑, 拿, 寄,	他们走过来, 我们走过去。// They are walking past us; we are walking past them. (Jizhou 138) 我看见她跑过桥去了。// I saw her run over the bridge. (Jizhou 142)
过来	guolai	过来: to come over V+过来: demonstrates that the action is completed near to the speaker after crossing a bridge or passing by another location	他们走过来, 我们走过去。// They are walking past us; we are walking past them. (Jizhou 138) 他寄过来了一份入学申请书。// He sent a school entrance application. (Jizhou 141)
起来	qilai	起来: the beginning or the continuing of an action V+起来: demonstrates that the action is continuing 飞, 拿, 抽, 站	看见老师走进教室, 大家都站了起来。// Seeing the teacher enter the classroom, everyone stands up. (Jizhou 140) 蝴蝶飞起来了。// The butterfly flies. (Jizhou 138)

Appendix B: Example Translations with Pinyin

All examples located below are property of the author.

Simple Complement Example

今天是星期六，王朋没有课，于是就躺在床上睡懒觉。

Jīntiān shì xīngqīliù, Wáng Péng méiyǒu kè, yúshì jiù tǎng zài chuáng shàng shuìlǎnjiào.

Today is Saturday and Wang Peng has no classes, so therefore he is being lazy and sleeping in.

过了会，他妈妈喊道“王朋！现在已经九点半了，你还不起床？”

Guò le huì, tā māma hǎndào, “Wáng Péng! Xiànzài yǐjīng jiǔdiǎnbàn le, nǐ hái bù qǐchuáng?”

Soon, his mother shouts, “Wang Peng! It’s already 9:30; you still haven’t woken up?”

快下楼来(1)吃早饭！”

Kuài xiàlóu lái chī zǎofàn!”

Hurry downstairs and eat breakfast!”

王朋咕哝着说：“知道了！我马上来(2)！”于是他穿好衣服，走下楼去(3)。

Wáng Péng gūnong zhe shuō: “Zhīdào! Wǒ mǎshàng lái!” Yúshì tā chuān hǎo yīfu, zǒu xiàlóu qù.

Wang Peng mutters, “I know! I’m coming!” Then he gets up, gets dressed, and walks downstairs.

Example: V + 上来/上去 and V + 下来/下去

王朋走到楼下。他妈妈已经给他准备好了早饭。

Wáng Péng zǒu dào lóuxià. Tā māma yǐjīng gěi tā zhǔnbèi hǎole zǎofàn.

Wang Peng walks downstairs. His mother has already prepared breakfast.

“妈妈，是油条和豆浆啊？这我最喜欢的早饭了。”

“Māma, shì yóutiáo hé dòujiāng a? Zhè shì wǒ zuì xǐhuan de zǎofàn le.”

“Mom, is that fried dough and soy milk? This is my favourite breakfast.”

“我知道！今天是你的生日啊！生日快乐！”她拥抱了一下她的儿子，

“Wǒ zhīdao! Jīntiān shì nǐde shēngrì a! Shēngrì kuàilè!” Tā yōngbào le yíxià tā de érzi,

“I know! Today is your birthday! Happy birthday!” She hugs her son,

“你看！奶奶寄来了一款游戏机(1)，给你的。”

“Nǐ kàn! Nǎinai jìlái le yīkuǎn yóuxìjī, gěi nǐde.”

“Look! Your grandma sent a videogame to you.”

“太好了！”王朋喊道，“是最终幻想十三！我朋友告诉我

“Tàihǎole!” Wáng Péng hǎnzhe, “Shì Zuì ZhongHuan Xiǎng Shìsan! Wǒ péngyou gàosu wǒ

“Fantastic!” Wang Peng shouts, “It’s Final Fantasy 13! My friend told me

这是一款非常好玩的游戏机！奶奶怎么会知道啊？”

zhèshì yīkuǎn fēicháng hǎowán de yóuxìjī! Nǎinai zěnmē huì zhīdao a?”

this is an extraordinarily fun game to play! How did Grandma know?”

“你吃完早饭后应该给她打个电话谢谢她，但是现在请先放

“Nǐ chī wán zǎofān hòu yīnggāi gěi tā dǎ gè diànhuà xièxiē tā, dànshì xiànzài qǐng xiān fang

“After you finish your breakfast you should give her a call to thank her, but first please put

下那个游戏机。”

xià nàge yóuxìjī.”

the game upstairs.”

“最好吃的早饭加上超级好玩的游戏机！”他边说边把游戏机放

“Zuìhǎo chī de zǎofān jiāshàng chāoji hǎowán de yóuxìjī!” Tā biānshuō biān bǎ yóuxìjī fang

“My favourite breakfast plus a fantastically fun video game!” he said as he put the game

上楼去(2)。然后又跑下来(3)高兴地说“这是我最棒的生日了！”

shànglóu qù. Ránhòu yòu pǎo xiàlái gāoxìng dì shuō “Zhè shì wǒ zuì bàngde shēngrì le!”

upstairs. Then he ran back downstairs and said happily, “This is my most wonderful

birthday!”

Example: V+ 回来/回去

王朋吃完早饭，给他奶奶打了个电话：“奶奶，您好！”

Wáng Péng chī wán zǎofān, gěi tā nǎinai dǎgè diànhuà: “Nǎinai, nǐnhǎo!”

Wang Peng finished eating his breakfast and gave his grandma a phone call: “Grandma, hello!”

“你好乖孙子！生日快乐！”

“Nǐhǎo guāi sūnzi! Shēngrì kuale!”

“Hello my clever grandson! Happy birthday!”

“谢谢奶奶！您的礼物非常好，我觉得好玩极了！您怎么知道我

“Xièxiē Nǎinai! Nín de lǐwù fēicháng hǎo, wǒ juéde hǎowán jǐle! Nín zěnmē zhīdao wǒ

“Thank you Grandma! Your gift is fantastic; I think it’s extremely fun to play! How did you know I

喜欢那款游戏机？”

xǐhuan nàkuǎn yóuxìjī?”

liked that game?”

奶奶笑着说：“我不告诉你，是秘密！今天是你的生日。

Nǎinai xiàozheshuō: “Wǒ bù gàosu nǐ, shì mìmì! Jīntiān shì nǐ de shēngrì.

His grandmother laughed and said, “I can’t tell you, it’s my secret! Today is your birthday.

你准备干什么？”

Nǐ zhǔnbèi gan shénme?”

What do you plan to do?”

“我今天想到我朋友家去玩 FF13,⁶可能还有其他的事。

“Wǒ jīntiān xiǎng dào wǒ péngyoujiā qù wán FF13, kěnéng hái yǒu qí tā de shì.

“Today I want to go to my friend’s house to play FF13, maybe also do other things.

您什么时候飞回来了？”

Nǐn shénme shíhou fēihuílái le?”

When are you flying back?”

“下个星期三或星期四。我还没有买飞机票。”

“Xiàgè xīngqī sān huò xīngqī sì. Wǒ hái méiyǒu mǎi fēijī piào.”

“Next Wednesday or Thursday. I haven’t bought the plane tickets yet.”

“哦，知道了！奶奶，您的礼物是我最喜欢的，谢谢！”

“Ó, zhīdào! Nǎinai, nín de lǐwù shì wǒ zuì xǐhuan de, xièxie!”

“Oh, okay! Grandma, your gift is my favourite, thank you!”

“不客气，孙子！好了，这个电话太长了，太费钱了！”

“Bùkèqì, sūnzi! Hǎo le, zhègè diànhuà tài cháng le, tài fèi qián le!

“You’re welcome, grandson! Okay, this phone call is getting too long and expensive!

代我像你妈妈问好！”

Dài wǒ xiàng nǐ māma wèn hǎo!”

Please tell your mother I said hello!”

“好的。下星期见！”

“Hǎo de. Xiàxīngqī jiàn!”

“Okay. See you next week!”

“再见！”

“Zàijiàn!”

“Goodbye!”

6 FF13 is the abbreviation of the game mentioned earlier. Its English name is Final Fantasy 13.

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